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AUTHOR Bull, Kay Sather
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ABSTRACT

Cries for reform in teacher education are based on reports of declining student test scores and criticisms that colleges of education fail to teach values held by conservatives and recruit below average students. However, reforms may cause hardships for rural schools because of the historically lower status of rural schools. The recommendations made by the Holmes Group for improving the quality of teaching and teacher education may cause problems in the small and rural schools. First, the recruitment of teachers for rural schools is difficult because the main source of rural education personnel, rural youth, is poorly educated; second, most of the research institutions eligible for teacher education are located in urban areas; third, rural schools need generalists with several minors, rather than specialists as suggested by the Holmes Group report. Rural school teachers are found in survey research to be less favorably inclined toward extended programs, more liberal arts coursework, field experience, and professional coursework, and less likely to agree that the standards in teacher education are too easy. Direct threat to rural schools by reforms in teacher education includes: reducing the numbers of teacher in the pipeline; driving up salaries due to career ladders and teacher shortages; increasing recruitment difficulties due to urban oriented professional institutions. Reform must recognize the unique living conditions and needs of rural communities. (GGH)

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Five Year Teacher Education Programs:

Potential Impact on Rural Schools

Kay Sather Bull

Oklahoma State University

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Calls for Educational Reform

Teachers, the newspapers would have us believe, are a mess. They can't do math, they can't write and collectively their feet stink. Kids coming out of schools today have the same problem. Plus they don't want to work, they don't have good values, they try drugs and booze and their morals are worse than alley cats. This is what the papers and television would have you believe.

Besides the sensationalism, there are several reasons why there are cries for reform in teacher education. These begin with student test scores, which are declining, or have declined in a variety of areas as more and more children, who did not in the past, take the tests. There is, for example a fairly strong correlation between declining test scores on the ACT/SAT and the increasing percentage of students who are going to college. This of course is intuitively obvious but in the hands of a reporter it shows that teachers are not as well trained as they used to be.

There is also a public backlash against schools because they do not teach the values that are typically adhered to by many conservatives. Therefore many say that kids are not being educated the way that they should be. This seems to be a particular complaint when the students involved are members of a different cultural or racial group. Another backlash comes from the political dimension. Politicians and political organizations are distrusted by the public. Other governmental entities are seen as untrustworthy, such as the CIA. This untrustworthyness has generalized to the schools. Political institutions cannot be trusted

therefore neither can teachers, is the essence here (Popkewitz, 1982).

Another often repeated problem, is that colleges of education recruit below average students (below average in the sense of test scores). However education is the largest employer of college graduates in the county, some three million of us are teachers. If all teachers were to be above average, where would we get doctors, engineers, architects, and so forth. This is a red herring. If it were economically possible to have all teachers be above average in terms of test scores there would not be enough graduates in other areas to fill the demand. As it is, if you eliminate those undergraduates who would have to go on to higher degrees before they could become professionals (those who skim the cream of the crop by having salaries 3 to 5 times higher than teachers at the entry level) medicine, law, and so forth, we would find that teachers are in fact around average, for the remainder.

This gives some indication of the reasons for the call for reform. This is not to say that reform is necessary only that there is a basis for the outcry. There are many who assert that what teaching needs is not reform but better public relations.

The History of Educational Reform

Those who have been involved with rural education for a long time (Bush, 1987) will recognize the potential hardships that reforms may cause for rural schools. Historically rural schools have had to make due with whoever was from the community who was marginally better educated than the students as the teacher. In the nineteenth century, most rural children

(elementary) were taught by a teacher who had at best a high school education. There were few secondary schools, except in towns. Even in town most of the teachers had had only one year of post-high school education; usually from a normal school or teacher's college. This caused an outcry for reform, after there were a great many schools (before that most were very glad to have a teacher, any teacher). The normal schools became teacher's colleges, first two-year and then four-year institutions (Tyler, 1985). Teachers slowly up graded their skills. In many communities the older teachers died off and were replaced by more qualified, younger ones. This is the way in which change takes place.

Teacher's colleges because they had not started off as liberal arts schools were looked down upon by others in the academic community. Teachers, because many did not have liberal arts degrees were not considered to be the equivalent of other college educated professionals (Schwebel, 1985). To improve their image many teachers colleges changed their names to drop teacher's college from their titles. Some became parts of university systems and began to call themselves universities. This took place in the 1960's and 1970's. At the same time the last of the normal school educated teachers were being retrained and upgraded, e.g., in North Dakota newly trained teachers went out to replace older teachers, in rural areas, so that the older teachers could come to campus and finish a bachelor's degree, this in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In many cases the thrust for consolidation of schools came about because administrators at the state department level said that the rural teachers were not

qualified.

We are still living with the label of unqualified teachers. Even though many, if not most teacahers have more than a four year degree, in the public schools. So again we hear the outcry, teachers need more training (in liberal arts content).

This reform thrust has led, over the past number of years to mandates in some states for tests for teachers to insure that they are qualified; tests for students to insure that they are minimally competent, which of course reflects on their teachers; and mandates for five year programs. Some five year programs involve supervision in a fifth year (like a practicum where you are paid, but not an independent teacher--e.g., Oklahoma) to a mandate that all teachers have a five year educational program, only a small part of which can be in teacher education, e.g., California and Texas; or to a program which says start with a degree in content and with a summer of teacher education training you can be a provisional teacher, if you will come back later and take more coursework, New Jersey and to some extent California.

So what do we face now? There have been a number of reform manifestoes in this decade. The first was, A Nation at Risk, the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). This was followed by Action for Excellence, by the Education Commission for the States (1983); Beyond the Commission Reports, (1984) Darling-Hammond; Tomorrow's Teacher, (1986) The Holmes Group; and A Nation Prepared, (1986) The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. These are only

some of the proposals for change in teaching and in teacher education. Saunders (1986) indicates that in three years (1983/86) more than 250 such reports were developed at national, state and local levels. Basically all of the conservative proposals call for movement toward more content, longer education for teachers and so forth. We will use the Holmes group proposal as an illustration to show the kinds of reforms that are proposed.

The Holmes Group Report

The report of the Holmes Group (1986) which is very similar to the Carnegie Report (1986) recommends the following changes in teaching and teacher education (Sedlak, 1987): (1) all teachers should have a bachelor's degree in a liberal arts content area, such as mathematics, science, literature, and so forth. This degree would be a prerequisite to admission to teacher education. The rationale is that teachers do not know a sufficient amount of content. This approach is presently done in Texas and California and is an option in New Jersey. Teachers are hired with only a BA and get pedagogy later. Shanker (1987) calls such teachers "labor day specials". (2) Following the BA/BS degree teachers should enroll in professional education leading to a master's degree. This, assuming that the degree could be completed in a single year, as proponents of the program advise, would reduce the amount of pedagogy involved in being a teacher without making content too much stronger. Included in this masters should be broad dissemination of the body of knowledge which is based on the empirical knowledge of teaching. (3) Included in the master's program would be a supervised internship in the public schools. This would

take place in a professional development school where the faculty would be affiliated with both the school and with the university. Most of the faculty would be career professionals (see career ladder) and would have Ed.D.'s. The professional development school would, we assume, be loc ted near the campus of the university which may lead to some problems in terms of lack of diversity of student experiences. (4) All teachers would be required to take an exit examination (National Teacher Exam) which would test both content and pedagogical knowledge. This examination would be developed by a national committee composed of educators from the major research institutions (so that current research would be represented). (5) In addition to (4) above teacher education institutions should be more selective and raise the entry criteria to programs so that less intelligent and able persons are excluded from the teaching ranks. Many have proposed this, and, it should improve teaching if the less able are excluded. (6) There should be a career ladder for teachers. This varies across different proposals but all explicitly or implicitly imply something of this nature. The Holmes group wants three levels of teacher; the instructor, the professional teacher and the career professional. The instructor would have a degree in a content area and would have a limited amount of teacher education coursework. This person would teach under the supervision of a career teacher who would prepare the curriculum for him/her. The professional teacher would have a master's degree in teaching as well as a content degree. This teacher would be a fully functioning professional in the classroom. The career professional (no more

than 20% of the teaching ranks) would hold a doctoral degree in teaching (pedagogy?) and would be involved with school management, curriculum planning and other issues, related to teaching, that are now commonly done by administrative personnel (Johnson, 1987). The affect of this would be to eventually put more power in the hands of the teachers. (7) Only institutions which conduct research in teaching should be allowed to train teachers. To upgrade teaching and to make it into a profession teachers must receive a much higher level of educational experience than they presently do. Teachers must learn to be researchers and to create new knowledge about teaching. They can only be trained to do this in the major research institutions. (8) Finally all of this will make teachers more professional and will raise the level of salaries for all teachers. Teachers will have more control and more status.

Rural Teaching: Potential Problems

Teachers in rural placements need, according to some, e.g., Bull (in press), different kinds of training in teacher education than their urban counterparts. The Holmes/Carnegie initiatives specify a number of modifications which may cause problems in the small, rural, remote or isolated school setting.

Where will the teachers come from to serve the rural areas? The literature shows that it is best to recruit from those born and raised rural if you want them to go back to the rural to teach. However Muse (1977) states that rural children are less educated, more illiterate, are in schools with few resources with fewer buildings and low paid teachers. If we raise

the standards for teacher education how will this impact the recruitment and retention of teachers in rural schools?

According to Muse (1977) the proportion of rural youth who go to college is lower than the urban youth. They are farther away from schools, colleges, and departments of education, have fewer educational support systems and are narrower in experience. Typically the successful rural teacher goes to a small college, near her home and returns to the rural environment to teach. These data would indicate that the research institutions would have to change the way they recruit or some of the content that they teach if they are to provide an adequate supply of teachers to rural areas. That is, assuming that this is a goal of the predominantly urban research institutions.

An anlaysis of the geographic locations of the institutions who are members of the Holmes Group 1987-88 indicates that 85.5% are located in urban areas and the remainder 14.5% are in rural areas. Historically urban institutions prepare urban and suburban teachers and rural institutions prepare rural teachers. On this basis the rural outlook is not very good. Figure 1 shows the way in which this might look. Holmes group schools are in the center of each 100 mile diameter circle. Anyone not living within a circle is more than 50 miles from a major research institution.

Another possible problem deals with the academic major. Staffing patterns in small/rural schools often require teachers to prepare in a variety of areas outside of their college major, Muse (1977). Sher (1977), Muse (1977), and others imply that rural and small schools do not need

specialists, but rather they need generalists who are certified in many areas. Given the emphasis of the Holmes proposal, an academic major for all, the number of specialists will increase and the number of generalists will decrease. This should have significant impact on rural schools in the recruitment and retention process. Dunathan (1980) concurs with the need of teachers who can teach multiple subjects. He says that teacher education and state education agency officials have complied with the demand for specialists to the point that it is difficult to get a degree with more than one certification. Given the Holmes initiative this problem would be exacerbated.

Gardiner & Edington (1982) report that "In a nationwide questionnaire circulated by Charles (1969) to rural school teachers, he found that 97.4% felt that they were inadequately prepared to teach in rural schools. More recent studies done in Montana (Gardiner, 1982) and in New Mexico (Amodeo, 1982) have reached similar results." This would seem to provide support for the reforms proposed by the Holmes/Carnegie reports until we read their recommendations for certification at the secondary level, for rural teachers, which should allow several minors rather than a major and one minor to make the teacher fit the needs of the rural school situation. Typically the literature from rural teacher education would not support the major premises of Holmes and Carnegie.

Rural Teachers: The Data

With the exception of Bull, et al. (1988) none of the data based articles previously reported analyzed their data in such a way that

rural/urban differences could be examined. Bull, et al. (1988) found that rural teachers and faculty in teacher training institutions were less favorably inclined toward extended programs (19% to 30%), less inclined toward more liberal arts coursework (25% to 34%), less inclined toward more field experience (18% to 78%), less inclined toward professional coursework (54% to 58%) and less likely to agree that the standards in teacher education are too easy (38% to 46%). When the data were analyzed separately for teacher trainers and for public school teachers the faculty in rural institutions are always less in favor than are their urban counterparts. The same relationship holds for rural teachers when compared to urban teachers. The same relationship would hold for collateral service providers such as school psychologists, counselors, administrators and all special teachers, e.g., special education.

Rural Schools: Renewed Threat of Consolidation

Some will see the call for reform in teacher education as a direct threat to the rural school. Let us consider some of these arguements:

First, setting up a five year program, if it were implemented totally would remove one cohort of teachers from the pipeline. This group, say about 150,000, would not be available in the time of shortage which is predicted for the early 1990's. Many who currently would become teachers would not meet the new entry and exit standards and therefore would not apply for entry. This would further reduce the numbers in the pipeline. This is very good for driving up salaries but it makes recruiting in many rural areas, which are not tourist attractions, very difficult. Consolidation

looks better when you cannot recruit teachers to replace the ones that retire.

Second, salaries would go up for two reasons, career ladders and teacher shortages. Teacher shortages cause supply and demand problems which if they are severe can significantly raise salaries. The career ladder concept would further raise the average salary because professional teachers would have at least master's degrees and career professionals would have doctoral degrees. This could significantly impact the budgets in many rural schools. For example, Hawley (1986) estimates that career ladders will cost an additional six billion per year. SREB (1986) says that Hawley's estimate is too low. Increased costs lead to arguements for money saving by consolidation.

Professional development schools will be typically set up within a small distance of the universities who will work with them. Most of the research universities, 85.5%, are urban. Teachers model the kinds of teaching they see and they tend to want to go into settings like those within which they have experience. Unless there is a conscious effort, which is yet to be forth coming, to develop rural professional development schools, it is unlikely that many teachers will be oriented toward teaching in rural areas. If you cannot find teachers what is suggested? Consolidation!

Conclusion

The current wave of educational reform is crashing around us (Corrigan, 1988). We must plan carefully if we are not to be swept away.

The reasons, at least some of them, for problems in education are budget cuts, reduction in support for equality of education, reduced social services and increased military spending (Shor, 1986).

None of us are against all of these priorities but together they seem to lead to less education in rural areas. The focus of reform seems to exclude the rural school and focuses on urban settings where large numbers of students and teachers can be aggregated. Neither Holmes or any others of the major reports deals with the needs of teachers in rural areas.

Because of this lack of rural focus we, in rural areas, will probably be left to fend for themselves. This is unfortunate because as teachers become scarce and expensive there will be a new round of pressures for consolidation.

Changes in teacher education are caused by the potential process. Groups exert pressure to create certification standards, set salary scales, and so forth. We who represent rural areas should not oppose change, this would only be seen as being stubborn and reactionary. No, what we must do is to educate the reformers about living in rural areas; our needs, desires, and so forth. Reform, if in fact reform is to come, must recognize that one third of the children in this country live in rural areas and that they will need to be served in these areas for the foreseeable future. The way to make sure that this happens is to join the reformers and partake in the political process.

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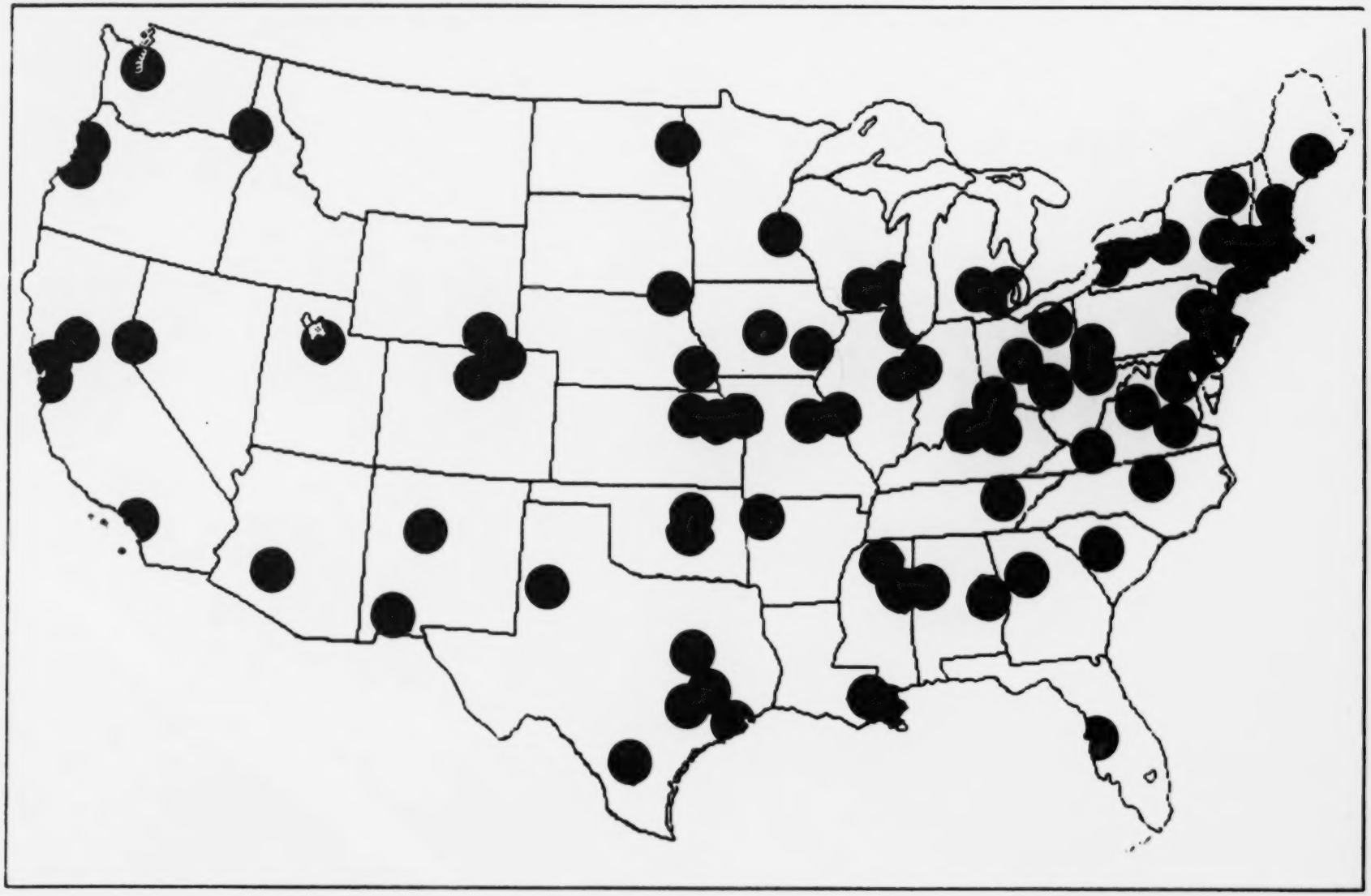

Figure 1

Holmes Group Schools
Service Areas